

ORALHEALTH_{ri}

A Quarterly Oral Health Newsletter of the Rhode Island Department of Health

Patricia A. Nolan, MD, MPH
Director, RI Department of Health

June 2002, Volume 1, Number 2

Lincoln Almond
Governor

HEALTH News

Department Receives Oral Health Grant

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that Rhode Island will receive \$197,000 per year for five years to strengthen the state's oral health program and reduce oral health status disparities of the residents. The funding is designed to improve basic state oral health services, including support for enhancing oral health program leadership, monitoring oral health behaviors and status, and evaluating prevention programs.

"Good health also means having a healthy mouth," said Patricia A. Nolan, MD, MPH, Director, RI Department of Health. "A safe and healthy population requires good oral health—including everything from preventing dental caries and unintentional injuries to prevention and early detection of oral cancers. By focusing on oral health, this grant will supplement the state's continuing efforts to promote health and reduce the health disparities among ethnic and racial minorities and low income populations."

Robin M. Lawrence, DDS, MPH, RI Department of Health, suggests that improving the status of oral health in RI requires a comprehensive, strategic plan combined with

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Message from the RI Senate Oral Health Commission

Elizabeth H. Roberts, Senator, State of Rhode Island

Hello, and welcome to the pages of this important newsletter.

As Chair of the *RI Special Senate Commission to Expand Access to Quality Oral Health Care for All Rhode Islanders*, I have been privileged to work with numerous public and private sector leaders who are concerned about the barriers to access and the oral health status of Rhode Island children and adults. Together, Commission members have crafted a plan with specific recommendations that build upon the strengths and partnerships unique to Rhode Island.

The Commission's 2001 Report is divided into three major areas of concern:

- 1) Oral Health Care Access;
- 2) Oral Disease Prevention; and
- 3) Oral Health Professions Workforce/Capacity.

Access issues include:

- ◆ Less than one-third of poor children in our state visit a dentist;
- ◆ School-based screening programs are unable to locate treatment options for low-income children;
- ◆ Excessive waiting lists have accrued at our two hospital-based dental clinics that primarily serve low income and special needs individuals;

- ◆ Community health centers that provide dental care are seeing high rates of uninsured adults and, consequently, are having difficulty continuing to offer dental services.

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Prevention issues include:

- ◆ Almost 10% of Rhode Islanders receive water from community water systems that lack fluoridation (another estimated 10% rely on wells);
- ◆ Numerous childhood facial injuries occur that could be prevented through the use of mouthguards in contact sports;
- ◆ Rhode Island exceeds the national rates of oral cancer incidence and mortality;
- ◆ Preventable early childhood caries is directly related to financial, social and educational hardship of affected children and their families.

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Message from the Senate Commission

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Workforce/Capacity issues include:

- ♦ A decreasing supply of dentists exists locally and nationally;
- ♦ Action is needed to ensure an adequate number of dental hygienists and dental assistants;
- ♦ Hospital and community health center dental clinics are in particular need of oral health professionals to begin to meet the demand for oral health services.

We have agreed on numerous recommended actions to address these concerns. Most of them require community partnerships and financial support.

Our focus now is on implementation and advocacy. Much activity is underway, yet resources are scarce.

Through your efforts, we can expand

the reach and be successful. As we strive to keep oral health access issues - particularly financing issues - on the public agenda, I encourage you to take advantage of this upcoming election season. As candidates for state and legislative offices ask for your support, take the opportunity to educate them about this important issue that has not yet received the attention it deserves.

The Senate Oral Health Commission will continue to work through its broad coalition of members to make these recommendations a reality.

We welcome your interest, support and advocacy to improve the oral health status of all Rhode Islanders.

HEALTH News

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promoting good oral health practices. These "common sense" practices, such as drinking fluoridated water, self care including daily brushing with fluoridated toothpaste, and annual visits to a dentist, promote oral health and prevent oral disease in children and adults.

RI OHPAC

The 15 member Rhode Island Oral Health Professional Advisory Council (OHPAC) convened May 22, 2002 with Nicholas Barone, DMD, as chair.

The Council identified the dental hygienist workforce shortage as a critical issue in the state's efforts to improve the oral health of all Rhode Islanders. Guest speakers at this meeting included M. Beverly Swan, PhD, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Rhode Island and Thomas Sepe, PhD, President, Community College of Rhode Island. Drs. Swan and Sepe shared their present and future visions of dental hygiene education at their institutions. A lively discussion between Council members and the guest lecturers ensued, resulting in a shared commitment to address the issue in the immediate future.

Gubernatorial Appointment to RI Board of Examiners in Dentistry

Governor Lincoln Almond has appointed Robin M. Lawrence, DDS, MPH to the Rhode Island Board of Examiners in Dentistry. Dr. Lawrence was the senior U.S. Public Health Service line executive with authority for the New England regional activities.

Additionally, Dr. Lawrence was the principal clinical consultant and oral health consultant for U.S. Department of Health & Human Services activities in New England. Presently, he serves as the Chief, Office of Dental Public Health, Rhode Island Department of Health.

Dr. Lawrence received an AB degree from Columbia College, a DDS degree from Columbia University School of Dental & Oral Surgery, and an MPH degree from the University of Michigan School of Public Health.

He served in the U.S. Navy, was a Captain in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, has faculty appointments at three dental schools, and is a Fellow of the American College of Dentists.

Editorial Policy

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Comments? Questions?

Articles, ideas, and announcements from readers are welcome. Contact the Oral Health Program at: RI Department of Health, Three Capitol Hill, Room 408, Providence, RI 02908.

Email: RobinL@doh.state.ri.us

Voice: 401.222.1171

Fax: 401.222.4415

RI Dental Hygienists' Association Wins Award

The Rhode Island Dental Hygienists' Association received the ADHA/Colgate Community Outreach Award for its *Hygienists-In-Action* program. The program, in place for three years, places volunteer dental hygienists at the St. Joseph Hospital Pediatric Dental Center to provide increased oral health access for inner-city children. The Association estimates members' donated services totaled \$25,000 through the program.

Special Olympics Special Smiles

The Rhode Island Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Initiative Special Smiles event occurred at the University of Rhode Island, Kingston Campus on June 1, 2002 for the third consecutive year. Dental professionals and other volunteers from around the state facilitated the oral screening of over 250 athletes, provided oral hygiene instruction, and distributed toothbrushes and toothpaste. Members of the Rhode Island Dental Association and Rhode Island Dental Hygienists' Association were well represented. Those athletes who did not have a dental provider and had significant dental needs were referred appropriately. The data that was collected is being sent to the University of Maryland School of Dentistry and ultimately will be used to promote advocacy and research activities for this underserved population.

For information concerning the 2003 event, contact Shirley Spater, DDS, MPH at 401.444.5995.

RI Dental Association Elects Officers

M. Christine Benoit, DMD, a Charlestown general dentist, was installed as President of the Rhode Island Dental Association. Dr. Benoit is the first female dentist to represent the Association as President since its formation in 1878.

Dr. Benoit received a BS degree from the University of Rhode Island and a DMD degree from Tufts University School of Dental Medicine. She holds membership in the Academy of General Dentistry, the Academy of Sports Dentistry, and the American Academy of Oral Medicine. She is a Fellow of the International College of Dentists and a Fellow of the Pierre Fauchard Academy.

Also installed were Drs. Martin Nager, President-elect, John Underhill, Vice President, and Albert Scarlotti, Jr., Secretary/Treasurer.

New Findings Concerning Fluorosis

An article titled, "Esthetically Objectionable Fluorosis Attributable to Water Fluoridation," has been published in the June 2002 issue of *Community Dentistry and Oral Epidemiology*.

Authored by staff from the Division of Oral Health at the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, (Susan Griffin, lead author), the analysis compared estimates of fluorosis prevalence and risk with perceived esthetic problem risk factors attributable to fluoridation. The authors found that anterior teeth are less likely to be affected by enamel fluorosis than were posterior teeth for all degrees of severity. They concluded that an estimated 2% of U.S. schoolchildren may experience perceived esthetic problems with their teeth that could be attributable to consumption of fluoridated water at recommended levels.

This finding compared with 12.5% reported in the University of York study (McDonagh, BMJ, 2000). The authors recommend educating parents on the appropriate use of fluoride toothpaste and reducing the fluoride content of children's toothpaste, rather than altering current fluoridation policy. CDC continues to strongly recommend water fluoridation for caries prevention in the United States.

Safe Needle Device Selection

Two new forms designed to help clinical programs select safer needle devices are now available on the CDC Division of Oral Health web site. In addition to providing instruction on how to use the forms, the web site includes information on developing programs to prevent sharps injuries; identifying safer dental devices; developing evaluation criteria; and screening and evaluating devices. You can access these forms directly at http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infection_control/forms.htm.

RI Special Senate Commission on Oral Health

Senator Elizabeth Roberts convened the June 19, 2002 Special Senate Commission on Oral Health Access meeting. Sen. Roberts discussed the 2002 legislative session and the apparent "rescue" of \$300,000 in funding for the hospital-based safety-net dental clinics as well as proposed Medicaid expansion and enhancement of oral healthcare legislation.

HEALTH staff provided Commission members an update of collaborative activities (diabetes, tobacco, water quality, occupational health, health professions licensing, WIC) with a goal of improving the oral health of all Rhode Islanders in the context of total health. HEALTH staff, with the assistance of a CDC summer intern, are investigating the issue of school vending machines/nutritional contents.

Department of Human Services staff discussed the state's proposal to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation *State Action for Oral Health Access* program. The proposed Dental Health Access project will be comprised of: new financing/purchasing strategies, broadening the provider network, expanding dental safety-net programs, and consumer/provider education.

St. Joseph Hospital staff discussed the institution's intent to develop a pediatric dentistry residency program in collaboration with the Brooklyn (NY) Lutheran Medical Center.

RI Community Health Center Association staff discussed the Assn's capital plan to develop 10 additional dental operatories for member health centers. The next Commission meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2002.

Announcements

NBC10/WJAR

Health & Fitness Expo

RI Convention Center, Providence, RI
September 14-15, 2002 @ 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
For further information, contact Linda Carter at
603.929.1551 or www.networkevents.tv

RI Board of Examiners in Dentistry

Board Meetings

RI Department of Health, Providence, RI
July 24, 2002 @ 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM
August 21, 2002 @ 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM
September 25, 2002 @ 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM
For further information, contact Gail Giuliano at
401.222.2151

RI Dental Association

Optimizing Patient and T.E.A.M. Connections With All the Right Moves (7 CEUs)

RI Convention Center, Providence, RI
September 18, 2002 @ 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
For further information, contact Valerie Donnelly at
401.732.6833

RI Dental Hygienists' Association

Financial Strategies for the Dental Hygienist (3 CEUs)

Quonset Officers' Club, North Kingstown, RI
September 14, 2002 @ 9:30 AM - 12:00 NOON
Annual Meeting and Officers Installation
Quonset Officers' Club, North Kingstown, RI
September 14, 2002 @ 12:00 NOON - 1:30 PM
For further information, contact Mary Anne Barry,
RDH at 401.821.2373

RI Oral Health Professional Advisory Council

RI Department of Health, Providence, RI
August 14, 2002 @ 7:30 AM - 9:00 AM
For further information, contact Maureen Ross, RDH
at 401.222.1171

RI Special Senate Commission on Oral Health

RI State Capitol, Providence, RI
September 18, 2002 @ 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM
For further information, contact Marie Ganim at
401.222.1772

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A Healthy Smile Can Last A Lifetime

www.healthri.org/disease/primarycare/oralhealth/home.htm